

The  
Great Weekend

FILMS w

An odd horror film  
that's just a giggle

EVER since special effects people discovered how to flay or disembowel a human being convincingly they have insisted on doing it in a series of horror films.

Those of us who regularly sit through such movies know that sooner or later, especially in the less cerebral offerings, we shall be confronted with sights loathsome enough to turn a delicate stomach.

It is an occupational hazard, but for those who love to be scared it is all part of the entertainment.

But in horror films, as in most enterprises, excess can be self-defeating. Too heavy a hand with gruesomeness and gore and terror turns to unintentional comedy.

One squishy glob of nastiness too many and the belief necessary for fright collapses into giggles.

So it is with *Hellraiser*, a film so over the top in the macabre department it is impossible to treat it seriously or even to feel particularly terrified by it.

It offers, not just the odd glimpse of discarded human offal but a whole roomful of it, hung on hooks or strewn around the floor.

One of the main characters, Frank (Oliver Smith) goes through most of the film minus his skin, oozing and dripping revoltingly over

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HELLRAISER  
Director: Clive Barker  
(George, M)  
★★

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everything and frightening the rats in his attic hideout.

In addition to the usual disintegrating corpses, copious blood, worms and scuttling nasties, *Hellraiser* has four weird demons called Cenobites, a galloping monster with lots of teeth, some hanky panky with a sinister box, a hobo who eats crawly things and various other bizarre inventions.

The film originally had an R-censorship rating but with cuts of about four minutes that has been reduced to an M-rating.

The film is the work of British horror fiction writer Clive Barker who elected to write and direct the adaptation of his short story *The Hell Bound Heart*.

It is his first directional effort and he has yet to learn that half-seen horrors are more scary than a full frontal display.

Barker calls his film "a love story from beyond the grave", a description that stretches the imagination a little. The love is between hard faced, frigid Julia (Clare Higgins) and Frank, young brother of her ineffectual husband Larry (Andrew Robinson).



ASHLEY Laurence battles with a Cenobite in *Hellraiser*.

It is Frank, an unprincipled adventurer, who experiments with the mysterious box and falls victim to the Cenobites, called from Hell or thereabouts.

He winds up a messy collection of bits in the basement of the old house where Julia and Larry live. (The real house, in North London, is reputedly haunted).

A minor accident enables Frank to rise from the dead and once again to take on human form, rebuilding from the inside out. (Special effects have a field day with this).

Julia has to keep supplying fresh victims so Frank can become whole again. "Every drop you spill puts more flesh on my bones," he tells her.

Keeping up blood requirements for Frank's slowly regenerating body has its problems. Some are supplied by Larry's daughter Kirsty (Ashley Laurence), others by the Cenobites who keep turning up cranky because Frank has escaped from their clutches.

Apparently all this is meant to be deadly serious and possibly someone who is willing can be frightened by it.

But mostly the horror is so overdone and so clumsy it is merely mildly disgusting.

It would have been nice if Barker had refrained from having someone step on a half-consumed corpse — and do it not once, but on two separate occasions.